

Eating at screen can lead to later 'snack attacks'

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Eating while playing a computer game or simply working through lunch could increase your food intake later in the day.

Researchers from the Nutrition and Behaviour Unit in the School of Experimental Psychology have been exploring ways in which memory and attention influence our appetite and [food intake](#).

In a recent study they assessed the effect of eating while playing a computer game. Participants were split into two groups. One group ate a lunch that comprised nine different foods while playing 'Solitaire' – a computerised card-sorting game. The second group ate the same lunch, but without distraction.

The researchers found that participants who played Solitaire felt less full after lunch. Moreover, the effects of distraction were long lasting. Thirty minutes later, the distracted participants ate around twice as many snacks as did non-distracted participants. Finally, at the end of the test session, the participants tried to remember the food items that they had been given for lunch. Distracted participants had a poorer memory.

Together, these findings highlight an important role for memory of recent eating and they show that distraction can lead to increased food intake later in the day.

Previously, similar observations have been made in people who eat while watching TV. This study extends these findings by showing how other 'screen-time activities' can influence our food intake in unexpected ways. This is important, because it reveals another mechanism by which sedentary screen-time activities might promote obesity.

Dr Jeff Brunstrom, Reader in Behavioural [Nutrition](#) and one of the authors of this paper, remarked:

'This work adds to mounting evidence from our lab and others that cognition, and memory and attention in particular, play a role in governing [appetite](#) and meal size in humans.'

More information: 'Playing a computer game during lunch affects fullness, memory for lunch, and later snack intake' by Rose Oldham-Cooper, Charlotte Hardman, Charlotte Nicoll, Peter Rogers, and Jeff Brunstrom is now available [online](#) and will be published in the January issue of the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*.

Provided by University of Bristol

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